



Better support, better outcomes:

Why mental health assessment & intervention is key to student learning & development

Today's classrooms are filled with students carrying "invisible" burdens.

Anxiety, depression, trauma, and emotional dysregulation are increasingly common, and yet they don't always show up in ways that are easy for parents and teachers to notice. If left unaddressed, these conditions can severely impact learning and development. That's why early identification and support, before a mental health problem is diagnosed and before a child qualifies for special education support, is more critical than ever in giving every student a chance to thrive.

School psychologists, social workers, counselors, and other behavioral health providers are uniquely positioned to make a difference in the education community's mission of discerning struggles early so they can successfully intervene and support.



A wake-up call on behavioral and emotional health

The pandemic ushered in a new perspective on student behavioral and emotional health. “It really amplified people’s stress levels and uncertainty and proved to be an eye-opener in how we view mental health,” says Theo Miron, PsyS., a nationally certified school psychologist and a Clinical Assessment Consultant at Pearson, citing a sharp rise in anxiety, depression, and behavioral concerns, even in students without previous mental health histories, as schools reopened.

It also clarified a critical shift in thinking about mental health as more than a side issue. “I think we now recognize that emotional well-being has to be proactively supported, not just triaged when problems pop up,” Miron notes.

According to the Institute of Education Sciences, more than two-thirds of public schools reported an increase in students seeking mental health services.¹ Globally, the World Health Organization (WHO) found that rates of anxiety and depression jumped by 25% since the start of the pandemic, with youth disproportionately affected.²

However, there are glimmers of hope: The CDC reported a decline in some of these symptoms between 2021 and 2023³, which may suggest that increased awareness and early intervention are starting to make a positive difference, says Deb Grill, MA, a nationally certified school psychologist and Clinical Assessment Consultant at Pearson.

“While these needs have always existed, now behavioral and emotional health are being talked about as Tier 1 priorities for all students, rather than just a select group.”

Deb Grill, MA

School psychologist and Clinical Assessment Consultant, Pearson



The right interventions can support not just the students with externalized behaviors like acting out or disruptions, but those with internalized struggles, such as anxiety or depression, who are more apt to fly under the radar. A key ingredient is layering in universal screeners and social wellness programs, then digging deeper with more targeted interventions based on additional data.

Screening systems, such as the BASC-3 Behavioral and Emotional Screening System (BASC-3 BESS) and the BASC™ Social Wellness Skills System (BASC SWSS), allow schools to get a read on behavioral and emotional wellness quickly to help catch potential issues before they grow.

“Together, the BESS and SWSS support a whole-child approach,” says Miron. “The BESS helps us identify students in need of targeted mental health support, while the SWSS helps us understand indicators such as belongingness and how students feel about their place in the school community.”



Better identification, better support, better outcome

Establishing a baseline is just the beginning. More in-depth exploration is needed to detect the root causes of student challenges in the quest to provide purposeful support.

When it comes to evaluating students for emotional disturbance (ED) and determining eligibility for special education services, few tools are as comprehensive, tested over decades, or trusted as the BASC™ Family of Solutions. The BASC System provides a unified, evidence-based framework that aligns with the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) practice model, which emphasizes a problem-solving framework that integrates data across academic, behavioral, and social-emotional domains.

“The BASC is the gold standard for a reason. Its streamlined approach allows you to see the whole ecosystem around the student rather than deploying multiple different tools,” says Miron.

Drilling down via the suite of assessments enables school psychologists to discern specific challenges, why they’re happening, and the best ways to support the student in terms of interventions, recommendations, and treatment — whether that’s inside or outside of the school environment.

“What I appreciate about the BASC Family of Solutions is how well it supports the full Screen-Assess-Intervene-Monitor (SAIM) framework,” says Grill. “Because the tools measure and report on important constructs that are highly similar across settings, we can stay focused on a common set of circumstances throughout each stage of the process of improving children’s lives.”

She adds, “The psychologist in me especially loves that it provides visual, data-driven insights to paint a clear picture of the steps from screening to intervention to monitoring.”

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School psychologist and Clinical Assessment
Consultant, Pearson

The role of data in driving meaningful support

There's a popular saying by W. Edward Deming, a statistician and management consultant, quoted among school psychologists: "Without data, you're just another person with an opinion."

With learning trajectories at stake, data are essential as the foundation for making informed, effective, and equitable decisions in schools. "With comprehensive data, we're better equipped to understand the 'why' behind a student's struggles," Miron says.

This depth of analysis allows a student support team to move beyond guesswork or one-size-fits-all strategies to tailored interventions and accommodations that meet each student's specific needs.

That's because data provide something concrete, says Grill. "They help us see where a person's well-being and experiences fall in relation to what's typically considered healthy or expected," she explains. "When we dig into more targeted data, like narrowband measurements, we can clearly identify where support is needed."

Tools like the BASC Family of Solutions not only detect areas of concern but also link directly to evidence-based interventions that make it easier for teams to act quickly and confidently. For example, if a student's assessment data reveal attention regulation difficulties in conjunction with anxiety, their individualized support plan might include executive function strategies, graduated exposure to fearful situations, and testing accommodations such as extended time or reduced-distraction settings.

Ultimately, data can transform reactive support into proactive planning to ensure that interventions are effective in helping students succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

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Strategic support opens the door to success

Once data have helped clarify a student's needs, the real work begins: designing and delivering the right support through targeted team-based interventions that will turn insight into impact.

Miron stresses that supporting behavioral and emotional health isn't the job of just one professional. "When educators, school psychologists, counselors, families, and administrators work together, they create a more complete understanding of a student's needs," he says.

Each team member brings a unique perspective: teachers observe daily behavior; psychologists interpret assessment data; families provide context; social workers identify community supports; and counselors offer emotional support strategies. "A collaborative approach allows for consistent support across settings, shared problem-solving, and more coordinated interventions," Miron says.

Sending consistent messages, maintaining shared expectations, and using the same language across environments creates a setting where new modifications can become part of students' everyday routines. "The more opportunities students have to learn, practice, and apply these skills, the more automatic and instinctive they become," says Grill.

A solid school-home connection can be the linchpin to success. After all, on average, students spend nearly seven hours in school each weekday — about a third of their entire day and close to half of their waking hours. Schools, especially via special educators and behavioral health providers, can have a huge impact during those hours; then, families can provide a seamless transition with further reinforcement and support at home.

Another key element of student support is monitoring progress, which Miron underscores as the most important part of the entire process. "It's all too easy to identify problems, yet not keep data on progress once we intervene. Pearson's tools provide specificity that can spot trends like whether a child's anxiety is waning or if they're cultivating social skills." He notes that if significant progress isn't being achieved, that's a red flag that different interventions are needed.

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Theo Miron, PsyS.

School psychologist and Clinical Assessment Consultant,
Pearson



Student success, reimagined

As mental health concerns continue to increase among students, schools face both a challenge and opportunity. The challenge lies in identifying and supporting students with emotional and behavioral needs early and accurately. The opportunity lies in using the right tools, data, and team-based strategies to make a lasting difference.

The BASC™ Family of Solutions offers a powerful framework for doing just that. From universal screening to in-depth assessment to intervention planning to ongoing monitoring, it helps clinicians and educators move from isolated decisions to connected, student-centered action. When used thoughtfully, it supports a more equitable, proactive approach that meets students where they are and helps them get where they need to go.

In addition, beyond individualized plans, many schools are also embracing universal strategies that benefit all students. Social skills instruction, opportunities for practicing emotional regulation, and intentional efforts to destigmatize mental health challenges all contribute to a healthier school climate. By proactively addressing common stressors or skill gaps at the Tier 1 universal level, educators can support all students before challenges become crises. Nothing is as effective as prevention.

The bottom line, according to Miron: “It’s about everybody getting on the same page for the betterment of kids.”

About the BASC-4

Cultivating best practices is an ongoing goal of Pearson, which is currently perfecting its newest instrument, the BASC-4, coming in 2026. The latest iteration brings clarity to today’s complex mental health landscape with newly updated norms that reflect our national population. As a complete assessment system, it provides a streamlined pathway from quick screening to targeted evaluation, helping you see beyond isolated symptoms to identify the full range of youth needs and strengths. BASC-4 will empower schools to make confident decisions and develop effective interventions for maximized results.

[Learn more](#)

Sources

- 1 [Mental Health and Well-Being of Students and Staff During the Pandemic; Results from the April 2022 School Pulse Panel](#)
- 2 [COVID-19 pandemic triggers 25% increase in prevalence of anxiety and depression worldwide](#)
- 3 [CDC Data Show Improvements in Youth Mental Health but Need for Safer and More Supportive Schools | CDC Newsroom](#)



About Pearson

At Pearson, our purpose is simple: to help people realize the life they imagine through learning. We believe that every learning opportunity is a chance for a personal breakthrough. That's why our c. 18,000 Pearson employees are committed to creating vibrant and enriching learning experiences designed for real-life impact. We are the world's lifelong learning company, serving customers in nearly 200 countries with digital content, assessments, qualifications, and data.

Visit Pearson's [BASC-4 website](#) for more information, or connect with your state's [Assessment Consultant](#) to learn how to get BASC access for your district.

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